

A descriptive analysis of the representation of social status through advertisements in Mexican print magazines

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to discuss the mechanisms through which social status is presented in print advertisements and make the reader aware of the ways they reflect and promote social status in Mexican magazines for their upper-class readers. The goal is to determine the relationship between social status and the messages advertisers create through the use of visual and textual semiotics based on the semiotic analysis framework of Bell and Milic (2002), and to locate instances that index social status reflected in the advertisements selected. Four campaigns were selected with a total of 25 advertisements included in two Mexican elite magazines only circulated in Mexico: Caras and Quién. Studies on the influence of social statuses presented in advertising targeting higher economic-class are scarce and this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon. The intended audience for these magazines are upper class readers with financial freedom and high social status, a sub-segment of the audience also underrepresented in current scholarship.

Keywords: Mexican advertisement, social status, Mexican elite magazines, semiotic analysis of advertisements

A descriptive analysis of the representation of social status through print media

Marketing, worldwide, uses advertising to promote and sell products. One of its tools is imagery. Advertisers present different types of lifestyles through their campaigns, which they hope viewers will desire to imitate. These lifestyles are stereotypes of their respective cultures and consequently advertising presents them in a way that audience members feel a need to be part of that group. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the strategies advertising use to reflect social status and to make the products appealing to their readers. It tries to deconstruct the advertisements promoting products associated with social status through the semiotic analysis of the signs and symbols used. The target readers of these magazines are individuals with financial access to travel, private education, and who have the means to acquire products worldwide.

Advertising is a tool used in a vast amount of cases, including political campaigns (Granato

and Wong), product merchandising (Syverson), religious proselytizing (Stolow), and military recruitment. Advertising is an important medium to inform and to stimulate interest in a product (Vikander). It is reported that in 2010 the United States spent \$142.5 billion in advertising and \$467 billion worldwide (WPP). This study focuses on advertising as it refers to consumer behavior. The purpose is to deconstruct the mechanisms through which social status is represented in advertising, specifically in magazines geared towards upper-class readers, focusing on the following criteria through which social status is conveyed: signs, symbols, color, lexical and non-lexical, and proximal devices.

Advertising

Advertising plays an important factor in people's lives. Through this medium, messages are conveyed through verbal and non-verbal tools. They are not static. These tools and devices are embedded in the culture and the context in which they are used. Every message,

whether verbal or non-verbal, contains ideas with multiple meanings. The main function of mass communication, and consequently of advertising, entails engaging in different activities such as connectivity, interpretation and setting examples (Kalish and Anderson 74).

Advertising offers viewers depictions of lifestyles that perhaps audience members may lack or wish to have. Social status is presented as a commodity that is achievable through the ownership of a product (Sivanathan and Pettit 564). Thus, the abstract construct of social status is reified through its representation in advertisements. The message is that through the ownership of a particular product, the individual can get in contact and possess social status (Sauder 280).

Definitions of Social Status.

Social status as defined by Max Weber is established by stratifying three components: property (Kalish and Anderson), prestige (Kong and Phau) and power (Whittaker). According to Sheumaker and Wajda, "social class may be defined simply as a division in society" (416). Kalish and Anderson discuss that social status is mostly represented by exclusivity, right of membership, special privileges, and ownership and is characterized by power. Both state that "ownership is a status; to have the status of 'owner' is to have a particular set of rights and duties" (66). Thus, in advertising, social status is projected onto the product. Rege mentions that there is a social transaction in social status. This transaction may not be physically visible but people can observe a change in status (Pedone and Conte, 250) or behavior in an individual (Rege 233).

These objects do convey and do influence a person's behavior. Rege later states that "the only thing a person cares about is how much money he is 'burning' on status consumption relative to other people" (234). These authors indicate that social status is attainable through the consumption of goods and determined that to obtain social status, it becomes a self-motive for individuals to acquire it and to make it noticeable to their peers.

Roles in Advertising

Advertising has a strong impact on society (Gustafson). Certain roles portrayed in advertising are considered to be role-playing in society. Advertising builds an ideology and creates a need to acquire what the campaign is proposing. Thus, Kalish and Anderson assert that "status is a kind of reason, a reason to act in a certain way" (66). Social status then becomes the reason individuals act in society. Advertising demonstrates what can be attainable thus giving you that social positionality. Nonverbal communication is applied in advertising to send a certain message without the use of words or dialogue. There are different forms of communicating certain general data for the receiver to analyze and understand what the message is trying to convey. For example an individual's sex, age, personality, economic background, place of work, origin, social clubs and attitudes can all be understood without the use of verbal communication. Body language is the main medium used to send a message with the intention for the receiver to either agree or disagree. Some forms of nonverbal communication mostly rely on body language, gestures and facial expression to carry many feelings without any written language.

As mentioned before, advertising is always structured for an idea to be successful. Gustafson states that "advertising is a powerful force in society because it is the matrix or context within which we understand ourselves and the world" (205). Most of the unstructured messages in advertising are what individuals are exposed to in present times. Advertising presents a lifestyle and lure people that what they are selling is the idea of becoming that in the advertising, not the product. As mentioned by Kalish and Anderson stated that "status is a kind of reason, a reason to act in a certain way" (66).

Advertising exposes consumers to various lifestyles. It encourages the individual to own particular products. In high-end products, advertisers are not targeting individuals who already own that product, but rather those that do not and wish to be part of that social sphere. The individual is being approached to question his or her lifestyle and status. Advertising also

makes use of non-verbal interaction that some advertisement layouts include and they interact with the audience.

Image and status is what sells. As mentioned by Gustafson “advertising usually attempts to penetrate and co-opt all aspects of worldview with consumer ideas and values” (206). If you do not own an image and style you can always purchase it.

The purpose of this essay is not to argue against advertising assessment practices. There is a need to identify and document the strengths and weaknesses of advertising and the representation of social status. Why is it so important to have social status? Advertising is frequently a contributing factor in personal changes to occur at the behavior level of individuals receiving the message. Changes in behavior reflect on the person receiving that message or image of certain products. It is through advertising that strategies of repeated messages are used to get a concept or product across to people. This process that happens through time and repetition is what causes the change in attitude in the person receiving the image or message. Intercultural communication, which is the basis of many of the advertising strategies today, may help create an atmosphere that promotes cooperation and understanding among different cultures and provides ads with particular characteristics that facilitates the desired outcomes to happen. Visual persuasion in advertising, most of the times, is considered negative because of the needs that the message creates in people to desire and actually acquire items that may not be essential.

Advertising is the number one form to promote a product and for it to be integrated in society as a form of necessity. Certain images of products become icons when featuring the advantages of owning. It is extremely crucial for readers being targeted to be exposed to the right ambiance, colors, and lighting. The purpose of the ad is to sell a fantasy and the consumer most of the times purchases the product with the ad in mind.

Advertising Topics and Implementation

Advertising uses repetition and reoccurrence as forms of strategic planning for a product to

be part of the consumer’s standard of living and everyday use. Any magazine ad that is appealing to the eye is more likely to have a positive reaction on people and tend to sell easier. The intention of today’s advertising is to associate particular lifestyles through products, images and beautiful people. In an ad layout, the consumer may see his or her image reflected or may know someone that may relate to that person in the ad. This intercultural concept is a huge success in advertising because advertising agencies seem to offer equality and togetherness.

Advertising is also about selling people appealing lifestyles and how they live and interact with other individuals. It is very common to see in ads more than one individual engaging in a particular activities, for example, singing, traveling, driving, or even eating. Colors, fonts, people, places and the environment are important for the consumer to relate to the ad and the product being promoted. Every ad usually has a story to tell the consumer. That is why it is very important to analyze how the characters in the ad are presented and whom they are interacting with. The excessive use of stereotyping in ads is frequently very effective and to some extent tolerated because it is very appealing. The researcher Edward T. Hall coined the term proxemics to refer to this kind of phenomena, meaning the placement of images or people, (personal territory) in any public space. This contributes to what viewers are being exposed to and accept it through the use of the product presented in the advertisement. It is a lifestyle what ultimately ads are offering. Currently, most members of society are mostly worried about consuming, owning and just having the advertised products to make their lives easier. Every product in today’s advertising world is presented a necessity in life. Every item advertised today is sold as a must that the individual must own. Advertising campaigns have always made use of attractive models to present the concept of the idea they are advertising. Advertising encourages the consumer to have certain lifestyle and own particular products so that they become part of a group that owns the same product. Gattone states that “images have come to play a key role

in this context, influencing public perceptions on a wide range of social, political, and economic issues” (499).

In most cases, print ads in magazines are telling people what to do and how it would feel to be experiencing a particular product, but there are no real bases behind it, since the reader is only being given the information without prior explanation. A vast number of hidden messages are contained in the words and images being used to advertise the product. Print messages found primarily in magazines tend to make the reader stop for a few seconds and view the ad because some element in the ad caught their attention. These elements include, color, placement of objects, fonts used, messages, animations and people used in the ads to convey a message. Ads are placed between sections of an article so that the reader will give the ad a few seconds to be analyzed. Sometimes the reader may stop and search for a logo or the actual item that is being advertised. Messages contained in ads, thus, are placed in such a way that the reader tends to be persuaded by the article being advertised. Persuasion tactics are sometimes difficult to spot and depend on the individual situation of the consumer being approached to be persuaded. Persuasion goes outside the normal parameters an individual is able to detect and seeks to make that person change his or her way of thinking either temporarily or permanently. Basically, any ad promoting a product is after certain reactions from its viewers. Advertising has become the key element for any product to become part of everyday life due to the connectivity that the product is looking for it to be adopted in an individual's life. Persuasion in ads is subtle and obvious at the same. Subtle because it makes the reader have the need to belong to that group of people and obvious because the sense of enjoyment is always present. The feeling of the person or their mood in a particular moment is what will make the audience member to spend any time on that ad. Mixed messages and feelings are constantly created through ads and transferred to the viewer. The creators of ads have thoughtfully researched appealing ways for the target audience. An important key factor is to persuade and make the reader have a

change in attitude towards a product. Delbaere, McQuarrie and Phillips state that “indirect persuasion attempts are common in magazine advertisements” (7).

Verbal messages and images change and expose viewers to many changes in our society. The ads directed at upper class readers are open to different interpretation and offer viewers a lifestyle to imitate or be part of. Ethical issues, values and morality are always factors influencing the final interpretation by the consumer, giving them the option to either disregard it or do something about them. The reader attributes a reason behind the image of a product and reach conclusions depending on the person's beliefs. Advertisements, however, are created to entertain, introduce and promote a product. Some ads are informative and others are geared towards the creation of brand reputation. While advertising should reflect the diversity of a culture, in present times media only reflects what the gatekeepers (the media industries) wants society to be exposed to. Stereotyping is one of the many ways media are hindering diversity in the portrayal of our culture. Media in their different types of ads are sending out messages and images focused mainly in obtaining people's attention through beautiful and well planned images in order to get the audience captivated and make them offer a lifestyle.

Ideologies are also affected by the content of messages because of the cultural meanings embedded in them. This means that through advertising various concepts may be transferred to other cultures. Exposing of ideologies is mostly common in advertising. Malmelin mentioned that “advertising is an increasingly prominent part of everyday life in our Western society today. More intensely than ever before, consumers lives are saturated by marketing and advertising messages” (130). Advertising leads them to diverse ways of interpretation. Since they have no prior knowledge of the theme or topic, they allow themselves to make up conclusions of what messages the ad is trying to convey. The more controversial the images are, the more they tend to stay in the reader's mind for over a period of time, enough as to purchase the item and try it out.

Research Questions

Based on the discussion above, the following questions will guide this study:

- a) What elements are utilized through Mexican print media to index (symbolize) social status?
- b) What are the concept-ideas conveyed about products that reflect a sense of social status?
- c) What are the concept-ideas conveyed about consumers that reflect a sense of social status?
- d) What type of discourse is projected through the media regarding social class?
- e) How do advertisements use semiotics as a mechanism to influence the ideology of its viewers?

This research will address these questions using a descriptive critical discourse analysis to deconstruct the mechanisms through which social status is presented in advertisements.

Methodology

As mentioned before, the purpose of this research is to deconstruct the mechanisms through which social status is represented in Spanish-language print media (advertising) targeting affluent Mexicans, because Mexicans of this socio-economic stratus are seldom studied in the literature on consumer behavior and advertising. Different theoretical lenses (e.g., Bell and Milic; Kress and van Leeuwen) were used to view and analyze the different symbolic components that the advertisements included to index social status.

Criteria for Selection

I selected four campaigns and a total of 25 advertisements from two Mexican magazines: *Caras* and *Quién*. The campaigns were from a published list of the top 100 global companies. The campaigns used a minimum of three different images and were advertised in two Mexican magazines with national circulation. While global corporations market a variety of goods and services, only campaigns for high-end products being marketed to affluent Mexicans were considered. The advertising

campaigns selected were Nestlé Nido Excella Gold Milk (Nestlé Leche Nido Excella Gold), Audi Mexico automobiles, Antara Fashion Mall (a shopping center in Mexico City) and Estée Lauder cosmetics. They serve as a case study to find the interconnection between semiotic elements and social status. The study focuses on how social status is represented in these ads and the concepts used to denote prestige and power for the Mexican elite.

The analytical approach for this study is informed by Bell and Milic (2002)'s use of Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) semiotic analysis. Their framework provides a set of tools to identify and describe visual elements and referents within an advertisement image. Using this approach, I will deconstruct the elements that index social status in the advertisements selected. This framework socially contextualizes the process of analysis, while providing a deeper and richer analysis through the consideration of the objective formal relationships within the images (Bell and Milic, 203–204).

Profile of the Magazines

The images (advertisements) were collected from *Caras* and *Quién* magazines. These magazines were selected because they target the social elite of Mexico.

Quién

According to its website, the magazine *Quién te lo cuenta mejor* (who tells it better), commonly known as *Quién*, had a monthly print run of 120,000 distributed only in Mexico, with a bi-weekly frequency, and a total readership of 456,000. Its reader profile was 28% male and 72% female, with an age range of 18–24 (15%), 25–34 (30%), 35–44 (31%) and 45+ (24%). *Quién* described its readers in the following way:

Mujeres y hombres vanguardistas, modernos, urbanos y socialmente activos. Gente que viaja, consume y vive el estilo de vida de la alta sociedad mexicana. (Males and females who are avant-garde, modern, urban-hip, stylish and socially involved. People who take pleasure in

traveling, as well as have expensive taste and enjoy a VIP social lifestyle within Mexico's high society.)

Caras

According to its website, the magazine *Caras* (faces) features Mexican high-society, social gatherings, VIP events, fashion, entertainment, culture, travel, and royalty news, and published by Editorial Televisa. According to Mexico's National Print Media Institute (Padrón Nacional de Medios Impresos, <http://pnmi.segob.gob.mx/>), *Caras* has a monthly print run of 18,691 magazines for paid subscribers. Its reader profile is 36% male, 64% female, with an age range of 13–18 (1%), 19–24 (16%), 25–34 (32%), 35–44 (34%), and 45 and above (17%), with distribution only in Mexico. It states:

La Revista Caras es la publicación que le ofrece lo más selecto de la vida social en México y el mundo, con artículos internacionales exclusivos, el glamour de Hollywood y las personalidades que marcan la pauta reflejando un estilo de vida sofisticado y cosmopolita para aquellos que exigen calidad. (Caras magazine offers its readers the most exclusive of Mexico's society and the world by including articles of international events, as well as Hollywood's glamour and of those celebrities who reflect a sophisticated and cosmopolitan lifestyle. Caras also features Mexican high-society, social gatherings, events, fashion, entertainment, culture, and travel and royalty news.)

Procedures Used to Analyze the Advertisements

I will deconstruct the images from the campaigns using Bell and Milic's and Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of semiotic analysis, in order to locate instances of the indexing of social status, as represented in the advertisements. Based on a review of the literature, I selected the following criteria to deconstruct the advertisements into the constituent elements that comprise the advertisers' strategies for

indexing social class and social status and the product itself. The structure of Kress and van Leeuwen's semiotic analysis will be used to deconstruct and demonstrate how social status is represented in advertisements.

Phenotype. This characteristic of human skin color makes a significant contribution to social perception (Maddox 383). Phenotypes are characteristics and traits that are viewable to others, such as skin tone, eye color, and hair color.

Social divisions. Anthias mentions that social divisions create classes within society and states that "the practices and outcomes in inequality involve experiential, intersubjective, organizational, and representational processes which relate to hierarchical difference, unequal resource allocation and inferiorisation" (837). Thus, the use of certain objects and tools represents specific social classes and/or tools only used within a specific group of people.

Language use. English is a power language and a language of prestige. Phillipson writes:

English is integral to the globalization processes that characterize the contemporary post-cold-war phase of aggressive casino capitalism, economic restructuring, McDonaldisation and militarization on all continents. English is dominant in international politics and commerce, its privileged role being strengthened through such bodies as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and regional groupings such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the European Union. (187).

The use of the English language in advertisements categorizes it within a higher status.

Social positioning. Anthias states:

Despite acknowledging that gender and ethnic/race processes are relevant in determining social positioning and that they may influence an individual's class

position, within stratification theory, non-class forms of differentiation tend to be seen as either manifestations of class or as “status” categories. (835)

Thus, the message being sent on social positioning is not only visible but, seen through the use of objects that have acquired certain statuses within society.

Anglophone cultural references. The role that the advertisement plays symbolizes the status of the objects used. Bell and Milic state that they follow “Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) in focusing primarily on the formal features of the image that constitute the resources for specific responses to different examples or to different genres of advertisements” (207). They continue by explaining that different codes can define a culture that gradually has morphed into an Anglophone culture/society and represent social status, wealth, and positionality within society.

Leisure. The construct of leisure is important because it denotes social status and how it is represented in the advertisements by the activities developed within the displayed advertisements.

Idealized subject. Bell and Milic (203-204) explain that advertisements give objects an idealized meaning and thus become items that reflect a role in society.

Visual and textual images. According to Bell and Milic, advertisements contain indicators of what the audience will define the product to be. For example, the use of a grand piano denotes wealth. Bell and Milic assert that “the transfer seems to be achieved in the mind of the audience by means of the structure of the advertisement” (207).

Visual semiotics. The analytical tool used recognizes three primary dimensions of visual semiotics vis-à-vis the image: (a) the representational (i.e., narrative process vs. conceptual process); (b) the interaction with the viewer; and (c) the metafunctional. Bell and Milic discuss how the representational

dimension will be reflected on the visual of the advertisement and the action that is developing in the advertisement: “The representational dimension...can be divided into the representation of narrative processes (‘goings on’) and conceptual processes (‘ideas’) within the frame of the image” (208). Bell and Milic mention that the metafunction is “the interaction between the viewer and the image” (208). Thus, metafunction is the communication between the objects and the viewer, such as the way an individual looks directly or indirectly at the camera. They continue: “Kress and van Leeuwen discuss the way interaction between the viewer and represented participants in images is structured by the gaze of the represented participants” (Bell and Milic 208).

Social distance. Bell and Milic further discuss visual representation and call it “social distance”; thus, they divide visual representation into three categories—personal, social, and public—that will also be used in this study to represent social status. Bell and Milic then state that “Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) analysis of modality, or the socially conventionalized realism or credibility of images, can also be regarded as an aspect of the interpersonal metafunction” (Bell and Milic 210).

Realism. This is “judged on dimensions such as color, degree of contextualization, comprehensiveness of representation, nature of the perspective, sources of illumination, and degree of brightness” (Bell and Milic 210).

In summary, for the purpose of this study, I modified Bell and Milic’s and Kress and van Leeuwen’s research on advertising approaches to take social status and social class reflected in advertising images into account, in order to be able to adapt them into this study. The approach I have adopted from Bell and Milic and from Kress and van Leeuwen is to analyze the potential meaning of advertising images, as well as indexed codes and semiotics that have created constructs, to display social status and social class in advertisements.

Results of the Advertisements Indexing Social Status

The following elements demonstrated in the advertisements index social status and social position because of the actions portrayed in the layout:

a. Leisure activities: dancing, shopping, relaxing, playtime (these activities involve between one to two people only). See Figure 1.

b. Recreational activities (such as ice sailing), playing the piano, playing football alone (these activities involve one person only). See Figure 2.

c. VIP status and access. See Figure 3.

d. Language used in the text is a mixture of English and Spanish. In the Antara Fashion Hall advertisements, the text is only in English. See Figure 4.

e. The use of certain clothing, props, surroundings, accessories. These elements do not carry social status per say, but when integrated to a specific activity, then that element becomes status. For example, the tea set in Figure 5. A tea set is made up of an ordinary small pitcher with cups and saucers. The action of the little girl playing in her room alone, the props behind her and the porcelain tea set being used, it now becomes an element of social position because a specific little girl is playing by herself in a secluded (private setting) with a porcelain tea set. The little girl's clothing and atmosphere places her in a higher social status position as oppose to a room filled with more children, that the focus of the action, being tea time, would be lost.

f. Phenotype of the models overall are light-skinned toned, colored eyes, blonde hair, referring to Caucasian or "European/White" features, both physically and in the choice of clothing. See Figure 6.



Figure 1: Nestlé Nido Excella Gold – French Window



Figure 2: Audi México – Perfección



Figure 3: Audi México – Like a Boss



Figure 4: Antara Fashion Hall – Spring Goddess



Figure 6: Estée Lauder – Vivid Shine



Figure 5: Nestlé Nido Excella Gold – Tea Time

Categories of Elements Indexing Social Status

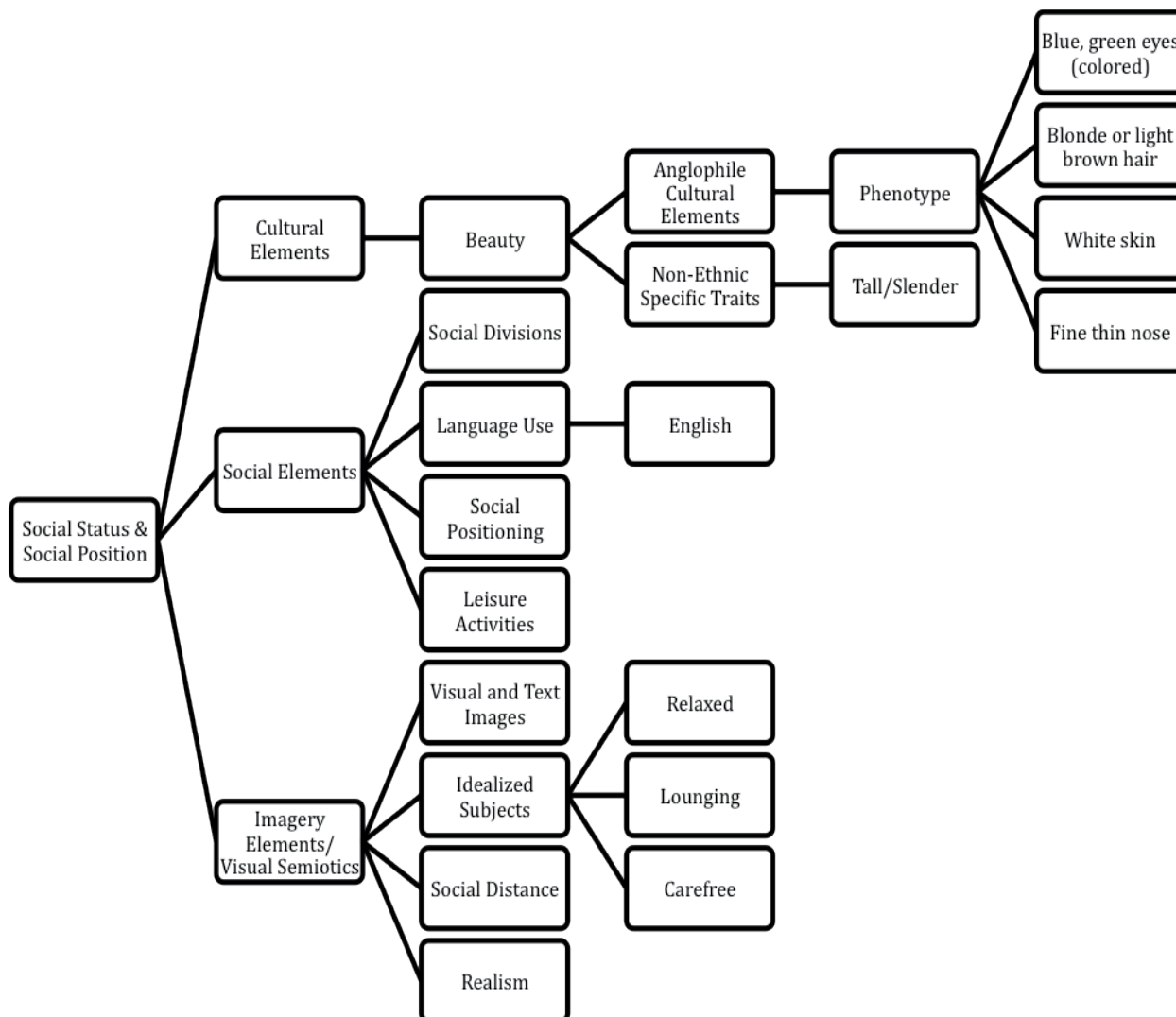


Figure 7: Categories of Elements

In Figure 7, the diagram demonstrates the elements that according to high society Mexicans, indicates social status and how the image of beauty is created. The concept of beauty is predetermined using the description of white-skinned, colored eyes and tall individuals. Amy Chua describes the population of Mexico and other Hispanics and what it means to be outside the range of beauty. Chua states “Latin American society is fundamentally *pigmentocratic*: characterized by a social spectrum with taller, lighter-skinned, European- blooded elites at one end; shorter, darker, Indian-blooded masses

at the other end; and a great deal of ‘passing’ in between. The roots of pigmentocracy are traceable to the colonial era” (57). In the figures to follow, Chua’s pigmentocracy will be reflected in the advertisements included in my research. Thus, Chua continues by explaining how society in Mexico is created and the individual is placed in the social scale depending on their skin tone. Chua states that “almost without exception the Mexican officials, lawyers, and business executives we dealt with were light-skinned and foreign educated, with elegant European names. Meanwhile, the people doing the photocopying

and cleaning the floors were all shorter, darker, and plainly more “Indian-blooded” (60). These elements will later connect back to the Anglophone cultural references stated in Figure 7.

Cultural Elements

Anglophone Cultural References

Cultural elements refer to those instances that strictly relate to objects or ideas that denote something specifically owned by a culture. Specifically in the advertising campaigns, there are certain objects utilized that refer to a different culture and not to the Mexican culture. For example, in Figure 8 the campaign uses a football as a prop. By connecting the football to the product it communicates to the viewer that there is a connection between the value of the product and the value of the culture indexed. Today football is, by far, the U.S.’s most popular sport, with millions of fans and supporters. Consequently, a football belongs to the national sport of the United States and the ball itself is then connected to U.S. culture because it is treated as a cultural element.

There are mayor differences between American football and soccer. Football requires space, specifically a large field preferably with grass and sufficient financial support to purchase the equipment. For that reason, football playing is specific to the affluent in Mexico. See Figure

9. In Mexican culture, soccer is the national sport, and consequently it is also the most-played sport worldwide. In the United States, football is part of the culture, and it is customary for high schools and colleges across the United States to have football teams rather than soccer teams. Thus, worldwide, football is associated with the United States. Football is played on a field that is larger than a soccer field. Also, football gear and equipment is more expensive than soccer gear and equipment. This in turn translates to a sport that is played in a power country and suggests the idea of the better culture.

In the Nestlé Nido Excella Gold advertisement, the use of a football is used in the advertisement to denote American culture. In Figure 8, a little white boy with blue eyes and rosy cheeks,



Figure 8: Advertisement – Nestlé Nido Excella Gold

dressed in long, striped shirt and a light blue vest holds a football. Mexico is not a country where football is the national sport—soccer is. The football symbolizes the United States, where athletes are highly paid and belong to the elite. The football in this advertisement represents the *better culture*, because the United States denotes prosperity and power.



Figure 9: Interconnection of Child with Football

Advertisers hope that viewers will directly connect the child with the United States where English is spoken. According to Rahimi and Bagheri, “in its role as a global language, English has become one of the most important academic and professional tools. English is increasingly recognized as, undoubtedly, the most important language to learn by the international community” (119). Thus, the English language is also a symbol of social status.

Social Elements

Social Divisions

Social elements are those that refer to activities that denote social status and index social position. Culture that is not common “*Kulture*”

is high culture, and technological culture while the elements and objects do exist, very few can afford to own them and have access to. The activities that are presented throughout the campaigns all reflect a social division, meaning a lack of people and thus making the scene exclusive. This exclusivity is reserved for people with status, money, and consequently access to certain leisure. The absence of people in the advertisements speaks of special attention, and only certain individuals may have access to that place or own a certain object.

In the campaign for Audi Mexico, the cars are placed in an exclusive surrounding like in Figure 10. The car is presented in front of a building with a special parking space only for the car. There are no other cars present next to the Audi, which is also placed in reverse so the



Figure 10: Advertisement – Audi A6 S line

driver of the car can have an accessible way to depart. In countries such as Mexico, where parking is limited, having a vehicle parked in front of a building denotes social status. This is only reserved for special people and like the advertisement includes in the text, the person driving the specific car has ‘VIP access’.

The European car industry in Mexico reflects the importance of status consumption, and it is necessary to demonstrate social status within a group. According to Eastman and Eastman, “status consumers are brand conscious and not price conscious” (9). It is more important to have status through the brand than to have a product that will provide you with no status.

The code in the campaign is that having an Audi will “always give you limitless access and powerful perfection available to a VIP,” and in this case, the advertisement refers to the consumer. Every word mentioned above was placed separately throughout the campaign. For

the purpose of this research and to demonstrate the codes, I have created the sentence using the words placed in the advertisements. The placement of the car in the advertisements is also an important code that denotes power, status, and having the car readily available for when the owner needs it (see Figure 11). Because of the different social classes that exist in Mexico, driving a European car is code for power, status, wealth, and ownership. Prestige comes with driving an Audi, and only a select group of individuals have access to the cars that communicate codes of higher social class and wealth.

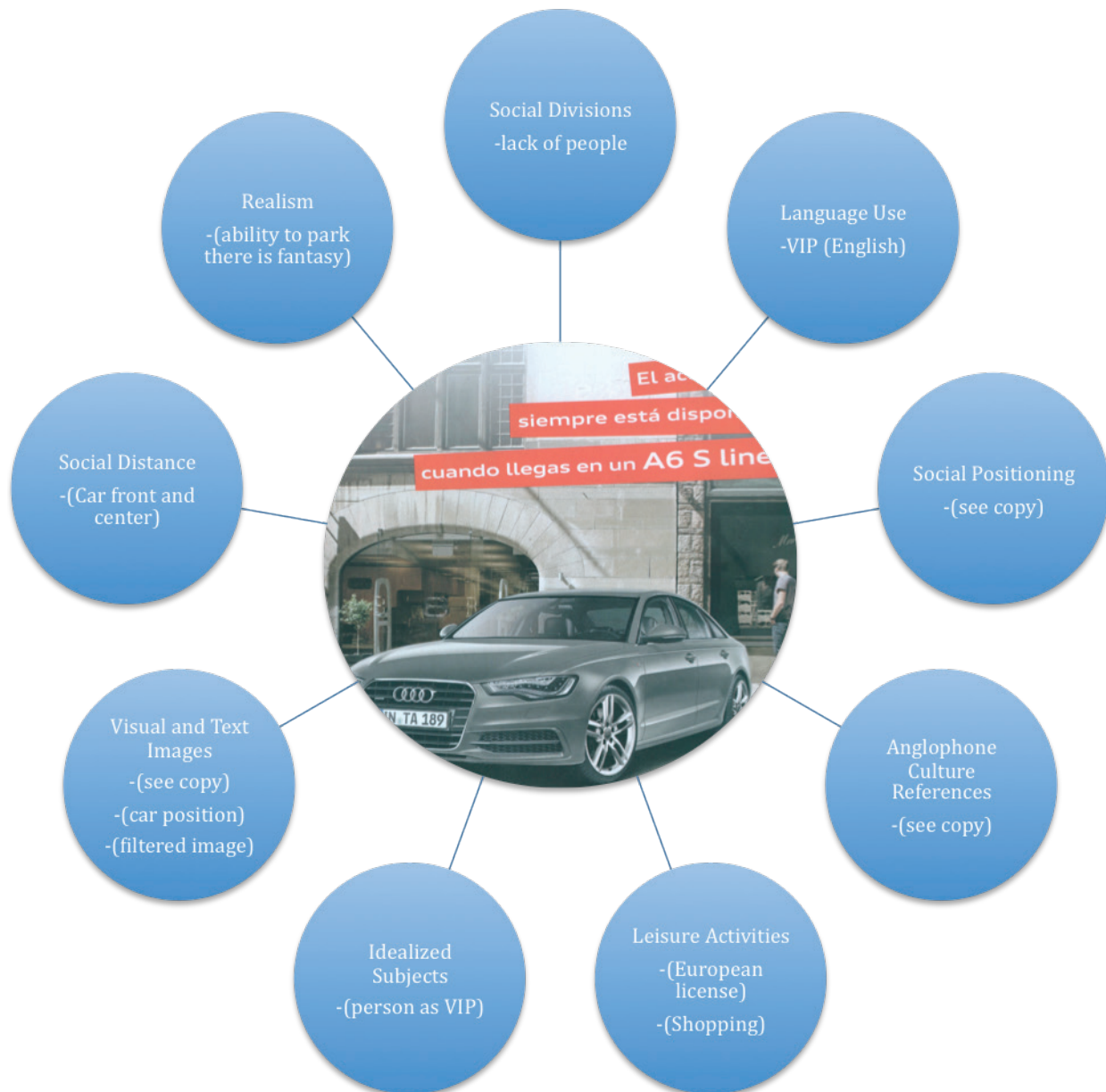


Figure 11: Interconnection of Vehicle

Language Use

Through the use of English in the advertisements, various words were created to denote social status. For example, the word “*excella*” see Figure 8, was created for the Nestlé Nido advertisement campaign, and though the word does not exist in any language, people assume that the word means “good” or “positive,” because they have the notion that the milk is good for their child. In addition, *excella* is made up of the first few letters of the word *excellent*

and followed by the word in English, *gold*. Gold is a highly valued precious metal, and also the color gold relates to power or a coveted status. For example, the gold medal in the Olympics represents first place; consequently, Mexicans who know English, can automatically conclude that *excella* means excellent and *gold* “oro.” Mexicans who do not know English assume that the word gold means *oro* because the color of the font is in the color gold.

Codes are used as a narrative in advertising using semiotics, which produces meaning whether verbal or non-lexical, by telling a story using coded colors and created words, with the intention to communicate a message. Thus, the use of the words *excella* and *gold* in this campaign communicates the concepts and ideas of being the best, top, excellent, golden child, and high expectations.

In the campaign for Audi Mexico, words such as *perfección* see Figure 2, *sin límites*, *siempre*, *disponible*, *acceso*, *VIP*, *poderosamente* (perfection, limitless, always, available, access, VIP, powerful) are used in the advertisements. Each word has a definition, but for the purpose of this research, the common meaning of the words is status and social positionality. The concept of having social status is reflected in the selection of words to advertise the car.

The advertisements contain messages in Spanish that convey social status. For example, take the lines, “Perfección sin límites” and “El acceso VIP siempre está disponible cuando llegas en un A6 S line”—translated into English as: “Limitless perfection” and “VIP access is always available if you drive an A6 S line.” Both messages suggest that perfection and accessibility are attainable by owning an A6. As mentioned by Eastman and Eastman, individuals purchase the status that the product offers them.

Figure 2 advertisement features a man in his mid-30s preparing his ice sailboat. His A6 is being compared to the lightness of the ice sailboat but is powerful enough to go at fast speeds. The word *perfection* is also used to describe both the ice sailboat and the vehicle.

The advertisers use the English language to describe the product and the purpose of the item, thus it is necessary for the reader to understand what the word means and how it is being applied in the advertisement. The ability to not only read English but also interpret the meaning is necessary to comprehend the advertisement. In order for the individual to do this, he or she must have knowledge of English.

I have mentioned before that when English is spoken in Mexico within a social setting or amongst acquaintances, it is a symbol of social status. Thus, in this advertising campaign the use of an English word within a Spanish

sentence, symbolizes social status and having the necessary literacy to understand the meaning of the English word. The presence of the English language carries enough weight that it is socially acceptable to use the mix of both languages in a Spanish speaking country. Consequently, a person must know a certain level of English to appreciate the symbolism in the advertisement.

Estée Lauder cosmetics, see Figure 6, are high-end women’s products, known worldwide.

Consequently, the advertising campaign targets only women. The words *perfectionist*, *vivid*, *pure shine*, and *illuminator* are presented throughout the campaign describing the different products. These words are also in the name of the product. Although the Estée Lauder campaign is worldwide, only Mexico was selected for my research; consequently, the four advertisements selected are currently printed in Mexican magazines.

The word *only* is used throughout the campaign and reflects the one of a kind shopping experience that is expected in Antara. See Figure 12. *Only* is a significant word in the advertisements because it connects the concepts of exclusivity, accessibility, and the elite in one word. Antara is the *only* place to shop and it is the *only* outdoor concept shopping mall in the heart of Polanco.

Antara is a shopping center in Mexico City located in Polanco, one of the city’s most luxurious residential areas. Polanco is situated in the heart of the city adjacent to Reforma Avenue and in close proximity to Los Pinos, the Presidential residence. Polanco is similar in tradition to Beverly Hills, California, because of its old money and high fashion stores along Presidente Masaryk Avenue. Lida (2008) stated that Presidente Masaryk in Polanco is an avenue of the highest value worldwide—even above Rodeo Drive—because of its commerce. In addition, she mentioned that “Mexico’s is the second most dynamic economy in Latin America, after Brazil’s, but its wealth is scandalously distributed” (4). Thus, wealthy Mexicans mostly visit Antara shopping center located within the heart of Polanco. Antara’s official name in their advertising campaign is Antara Fashion Hall. According to the website *explorando Mexico*, in its entry “Shopping Centers, Malls in Mexico City”, “Antara Fashion Hall is one of the most

luxurious and stylish places in the city; the looks of the complex are sublime and the quality of its materials is superb” (Equipo Editorial) See Figure 12.

The campaign creates a sense that shopping in Antara will bring the individual a better social status, because of what surrounds Antara, in luxury, exclusivity, and selectiveness (see Figure 12). Thus, at Antara, social status and glamour are part of the experience. Antara Fashion Hall is the only shopping center in Mexico City that offers concierge service. Antara’s concierge service is an exclusive amenity that offers its customers the highest level of personal attention and a distinguished shopping experience. Concierge Antara *only* in Antara is one more reason the advertising campaign indexes social status.



Figure 12: Advertisement – Antara Fashion Hall



Figure 13: Interconnection of Outdoor Activity

Leisure Activities

Signs to communicate social status in this campaign are present in the activities that the children are engaged in. The activities are of leisure and represent alone time with the mother. The children are placed in the center of the advertisement and are in a protected environment. The areas in which these activities develop are spacious grounds, gardens, and in large homes. The sign of the large home is indicative of a wealthy family. The advertisements feature someone aside from the mother attending to the child. In Mexico, families with high economic stability have hired help and the children have nannies to watch over them during their playtime.

Another aspect of social status representation

is that the children are very relaxed and engaged in a one-on-one activity. These are children who are protected and taken care of.

Keane explained that Pierce's theory of signs could also be verbal and non-verbal. Specifically in this campaign, there is a verbal message that states, "Behind every excellent child, there is an excellent mother." The original message is in Spanish "detrás de cada niño excelente, hay una mamá excelente." Throughout the campaign, Nestlé Nido Excella Gold constantly sends out a sign within their message of being an excellent mother—that only a level of excellence may be reached by providing your child with Nestlé Nido Excella Gold and then hopefully your child

may reflect the phenotype of the children in the advertisements. The activity that these children are engaged in is indicative of a more prestigious society that only a select few may have the opportunity to experience.

The campaign also contains objects that have a direct connection with money and the elite. The piano in one of the advertisements is being used as a toy rather than what it is meant to be used for. A little boy has his arms over the keys, without paying much attention to the piano. Thus, the child is aware of the presence of the piano in his home but just uses it as a place to rest. The piano symbolizes wealth and leisure. A piano in a home where an infant uses it only to hit any random key is using it as a play toy.

Figure 5 advertisement of the little girl serving tea from a porcelain tea set. She is alone and her table is properly set for four. There is only a teddy bear sitting at the table besides her. The presence of the porcelain tea set denotes social status and social class even in child's play.

In the campaign for Audi Mexico, the country where the iceboat is being prepped, Mexico, does not have a lake or pond to engage in ice sailing; however, wealthy individuals can travel out of the country to practice this activity. This elite group of people can also own an Audi A6. It is these signs of wealth and status that a person wants to assume, which are reflected by the lifestyle that is being presented in the campaign.

Imagery Elements/Visual Semiotics

The different visual and textual elements that are presented in the advertisements are used as ways to communicate social status in the campaigns. For example, the use of jewelry, the use of text, the visuals to reinforce social status, and the way reality is manipulated in the campaigns are part of the elements of imagery.

Phenotype

In the campaigns researched and included in this project, all of the people included have fair skin, blue or green eyes, physical features of the white race. The phenotypes of the women are fair complexion, blue, grey, and green eyes, light brown and blonde hair, slim figure, and

approximately between 25 and 35 years of age. The characteristics of the women are important because the product being advertised needs to be visible to the target audience.

The advertisement of "Mother and Daughter Bonding" in Figure 12 has several indexes to reflect social status. First is the clothing selected for the mother and secondly, the oversized handbag indicating she has a keen sense of fashion. Another index of social status is that in the shopping center in the background, very few people appear to be walking around. This indexes exclusivity of the place because a selected population has access to purchase items at Antara.

Both mother and child are enjoying quality time for the purpose of a leisure activity in an atmosphere of exclusivity in the heart of Polanco.

The physical features of both individuals also indicate social status through the slimness of the mother suggestive of a runway model and demonstrate perfection with both them and their surroundings. Both mother and daughter have long blonde hair; both are very slim and are of a white complexion. They are not representative of Mexico.

Visual and Text Images

Visual and text images also carry meaning in the advertising campaigns. They convey ideas through verbal and non-verbal images. For example, in the Nestlé Nido Excella Gold campaign, the message is to be an excellent mother. The actual title of the entire campaign is "*Mamá Excelente*,"—"Excellent Mom." This is achieved by providing your child with Nestlé powdered milk Nido. Throughout the campaign, this is demonstrated by the well-groomed child's clothing, and by the mother, who is attending personally to the child and engaged in cultural and controlled activities, for example playing the piano and using the china set.

The campaign demonstrates how a mother, through the different career choices of the child, may help him or her become excellent and successful. The career choices in the advertisements are of the elite: a musician, an attorney, an art collector, an athlete, a business owner, an archeologist, a botanist, a stage-

designer, an explorer, or a yacht owner.

The activities in which the children are engaged in the campaign are individually focused.

The campaign demonstrates the importance that the child must be given personal time and focuses on their alone time. These are privileged children who have special access to things and places. The selection of careers are not the careers of middle-class individuals, instead they are exclusively of the elite.

The focus in this advertising campaign is on the high expectations that each mother has of her child, which seems to align with the notion that every mother wants her child to be successful in life. According to the campaign, children who drink this type of milk have been raised by excellent moms, and the images indicate that they belong to an elite group that has access to wealth, status, and belongs to a higher social class.

Perfection, power, speed, accessibility, importance, leadership, and belonging to the elite comprise the central theme of the Audi campaign. The advertisements analyzed are for different class models of the Audi: the A1, A6, A6S, and the A8 lines. The campaign tells a story throughout the advertisements, sending out the message of wealth and social status. The young successful entrepreneur who holds a high position becomes part of the social elite that has economic freedom to purchase an Audi in Mexico. As Bell and Malic explained, visual and textual images are what give the viewer information to categorize the product. Thus, the phrase *VIP access* tells the viewer that the individual in the advertisement has to hold a certain status for the vehicle to be parked in front of the building in the first parking space. Furthermore, the cultural idea that living in Mexico and driving an Audi or any other European-brand luxury vehicle sends a strong statement of social class, social status, and wealth.

Social status comes standard with Audi vehicles. In addition, the characteristics of a successful individual as seen in the Audi driver are clearly stated visually and textually in the advertisements. In the advertisement for the A8 in Mexico, an English phrase states "*Like a Boss*," the words "*like a*" are stricken through and only the word "Boss" is left to read. The

A8 is the fastest four-door sedan built in the A class with either a V8 3.0 liter 333hp or a 4.0 liter 420hp engine. The starting price in Mexico for the A8 sedan is \$110,000 dollars (\$1,399,900 Mexican pesos). The advertisers felt it was necessary to mention the retail price of the Audi A8 to demonstrate how social status is attainable through owning an Audi. Having wealth, social status, and social positionality are more important because they give the individual the status of a VIP and the idea of being a Boss. According to the campaign, these two concepts of all access and social status in Mexico are a top priority.

The purpose of the advertising campaign for the Antara Fashion Hall is to feature the exclusive shopping experience in an outdoor setting. The theme in this campaign is how the seasons change, and with this change comes changes in the way a person dresses. The season goddesses must bring change of the new season—there are four goddesses: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Aside from the seasons, Antara Fashion Hall also presents Mother and Daughter Bonding spreads and the winter Believe advertisement. All of the campaigns are in English and present a magical place within Antara.

The visual and textual images in the Estee Lauder campaign see Figure 15, offer products that women can use to be more radiant and help restore any naturally occurring skin imperfections due to age. Age is not specifically mentioned but through the name of the product, its purpose is understood. It is not specifically stated as such, but the concept and idea behind the purpose of the product is to provide the necessary tools to become and remain physically beautiful. The campaign solely concentrates on the product being advertised. Based on the physical features of the women, as mentioned before, it may be assumed that the women belong to an elite group and mostly attend social functions where a high social status is represented.

Through the use of such products, the campaign's focus is on the ability to wear invisible products to hide imperfections. Another theme is to be radiant and visibly luminous by recharging your skin. These products will offer women's skin the necessary hydration to always

look young and energized. The text is written in Spanish and states “*ahora recarga tu piel*” (now recharge your skin), “*imagina no tener nada que ocultar*” (imagine not having anything to hide), “*maquillaje que no se ve, ni se siente*” (makeup that is invisible and weightless), and the reoccurring theme is flawless-looking, visibly radiant skin.

Estee Lauder’s concept of perfect skin is reflected through the women featured in the advertisements. With the advertiser’s use of images and their close placement of the models before the audience, these advertisements suggest that these women now belong to a special group of females who enjoy having perfect skin. Thus, ultimately the viewer would also like to belong to that elite group of women that use Estee Lauder, and consequently, will also give them social status through the brand. See Figure 14.



Figure 14: Advertisement – Estée Lauder Cosmetics



Figure 15: Interconnection of Female Model

Idealized Subjects

As stated earlier, the Polanco neighborhood is the place where old money families reside and people of intellectual tastes in the arts, in fine eateries and in elegance reside as well. It is similar to living in the old European cities of Paris, Rome, or Barcelona and perhaps even Manhattan. Polanco has always been surrounded by other bigger neighborhoods. Polanco residents make it clear, when asked if they live in Polanco: “soy de Polanco”—“I’m from Polanco.” The word itself has a connotation of rich, powerful, and old money individuals.

To own an apartment on Presidente Masaryk Avenue or Campos Eliseos (Champs-Élysées) or to own a house in Polanco represents social status, wealth, and exclusivity. Although there are other places more expensive than Polanco, to live and shop in Polanco is for the elite, because the area has exclusive status for the rich and upscale. It was necessary to describe the area of where Antara Fashion Hall is located because of the importance that the location holds, which then becomes a code of social status for those individuals who have the possibility to shop in that mall. In the advertising campaign, the main area of the mall is always pictured and referenced as Antara, the outdoor exclusive shopping center.

The words used in the Estee Lauder campaign to describe the products also describe the lifestyle of the individual, a lifestyle of glamour, sophistication, and exclusivity. In the advertisements, the human subjects are not engaged in any particular activity, but rather they are only posing. Their flawless skin and complexion makes their outer beauty radiate confidence and demonstrate good taste in their selection of makeup.

Sensuality is communicated by placing the models’ hands either on the neck or close to the mouth, which accentuates the facial area where the product will be used. The women of Estee Lauder have always been portrayed as sophisticated and successful. Thus, the women who use Estee Lauder identify with the women in the advertisements and have similar interests. They are successful and demonstrate social status through their choice of attire, jewelry, and

makeup.

Visual semiotics

In the advertisement of the child with the football, the child is alone out in the garden playing. There are no adults or other children visible, communicating that the child is in a private place and in a spacious backyard. Also, the child resting over the piano is alone, and because of the size of the piano, it is located in a room where enough space has to be available. Both of the advertisements index the lifestyle of both children. They are in a large home, either with their mother or hired help looking after them. This is similar in the advertisement with the little girl having tea with her teddy bear, who is in her room. In the background, there is a large, opened, and mirrored armoire with clothes and sunlight coming in through a window. All three advertisements share the concept of ample space, leisure activity, and security for all three children as well as their possessions around their homes.

The Audi campaign indicates an individual who is economically successful, who has the freedom to travel out of the country to practice leisure sports, and whom always has VIP access as stated in the advertisements. The individual who drives an Audi is selective of his surroundings and seeks perfection. The Audi owner enjoys elite activities where he can have personal attention. Like with the other campaigns in my research, the Audi campaign also suggests a *better culture*, through the use of the ice sailboat. This type of sailboat is only practiced on frozen lakes or places with cold temperatures. Mexico does not have any place where ice sailboat racing occurs. Thus indicating that somewhere out of the country, this sport is practiced, perhaps in the United States or Europe. According to the Swedish Ice Sailing Federation the cost of an ice sailboat starts at \$13,363.50 dollars or 10,000 Euros. For this analysis, the description of these elements is important to index social status and social class. Aside from driving an Audi, other factors indicate social status, such as: location, activity, attire, and phenotype. The individual in the Audi advertisement is in his early 30s, light skinned, dressed in sports attire, and a world

traveler.

Social Distance

The campaigns demonstrate a commodity, but most importantly they demonstrate an activity and what an individual may achieve from owning the product in question. In the car campaign, social status and social class are automatically included in the vehicle, as indicated by the actions that are presented in the advertisements. Driving an Audi will open doors to exclusivity and VIP access.

A luxury vehicle parked in front of a building waiting for the owner is a symbol of status. People may not know who the person is or what he does, but the scenario of having a luxury car in front of any building indicates social status, power, and wealth and this will distance the person from other individuals.

Realism

The symbolism transformed into reality from owning a car will possibly give the owner a certain status. The idea of having access, the individual will possess access to exclusivity once he takes ownership of the vehicle. This conveys social status and is important in order for the buyer to feel connected with the brand and feel like he has acquired a degree of social status within society.

The campaigns indicate wealth, social status, and selectiveness because of the choice of settings, atmosphere, and activities that the children are engaging in. Each child was carefully selected to represent a golden child. Every child in the campaign is of fair complexion, has colored eyes and light colored hair, and is dressed in light-colored clothing. Social status and social class are attainable if you are able to provide your child with a piano, a football, a porcelain tea set, and a house with French doors. Not all these items have social status on their own, but within a context of an elite group of people, they then become commodities and consequently gain a value that transforms into a social status.

In the case of the shopping center, it is exclusive and constantly indicates social class and social

status. It is an establishment that indicates a place where wealthy people congregate. In the advertising campaign, the models and the activities they are doing reflect a fantasy world.

This is presented in the text as the advertiser refers to women as goddesses. Also, the seasons are heavily marked and the ads include two scenes of falling maple leaves in autumn and snow in the winter. In Mexico City, it is not common for leaves to turn into autumn colors or for snow to fall during the winter. The referencing of the falling leaves and snow relates to what happens during those seasons in countries like the United States or in Europe. Also, the possibility that “magic” occurs is considerable because this too holds a certain status, meaning, that in Antara everything is fabulous, grand, and exclusive—anything is possible.

To indicate social status in a beauty product and to be considered a luxury item, the models must reflect such exclusivity in their physical features. Consequently, in some cultures being slim and having a light complexion, fair-hair, and colored eyes indicates social class and reflects the individual’s social status.

Language Lexicon Inventory

The number of words in English used in the advertisements is an indicator of social status in the Mexican culture. Of the 25 advertisements, there were a total of 68 words used in English, excluding the text on the packaging.

The following words in English were used throughout the advertisements that denote social status: *Gold*, *VIP*, *Only*, *Fashion*, *Boss*, *Perfectionist*, *Performance*, *Shine*, *Goddess*, and *Ultra*.

The following words in Spanish were used in the advertisements that denote social status: *Excelente* (*excellent*), *Exclusiva* (*exclusive*), *Acceso* (*access*), *Disponible* (*available*), *Personalidad* (*personality*), *Perfección* (*perfection*), *Sin Límites* (*limitless*), *Poderosamente* (*powerful*), *Potente* (*strong*), *Liderazgo* (*leadership*), *Líder* (*leader*), and *Estilo* (*style*).

Conclusions

The advertising campaigns in two magazines presented in this paper encourage the Mexican consumer to have a certain lifestyle and own particular products to be part of an elite world that will provide access and status. The campaigns present ways to have accessibility within society. Throughout the different campaigns studied, I was able to establish a pattern and structure through the research lenses of codes, signs, symbols, icons, indexes and themes in each of the campaigns. Ultimately, one topic reoccurred constantly throughout the advertisements; the importance of social status and positionality within society, and for this study, in Mexico's society. As a result of this research, semiotic modes (Najafian and Ketabi 220-221) yield that elements such as phenotype, location, color, image, and language are used to denote social status and class in Mexican society.

I have always been intrigued by the nonverbal interaction presented in print advertising and the idea of the creator's message when producing an advertisement. Thus, through the research analysis performed, I can state that image and status dominate the campaigns that target rich Mexicans living in Mexico. Thus, the person (viewer) will consequently want to exist within what it is socially acceptable to own and engage in certain leisure activities. From my point of view, this form of communication surpasses the classical and traditional form of rhetoric because it is presented in this form through indicated a specific lifestyle. Thus, having your child relax over a grand piano in a spacious living room during his alone time is far more attractive than just presenting the product and its benefits and noting that the piano is not the product being advertised, but rather the lifestyle of the child.

For this reason, the main goal of this study was to deconstruct the mechanisms used in advertisements and make the reader aware of the influence that is created to reflect social status in Mexico. This research focused on how social status is conveyed through the use of codes, signs, symbols, indexing, and themes in print advertising campaigns. Thus, the use of certain products establishes or represents a position in society. Consequently, we want to be part of

the social status that advertisements offer. The campaigns analyzed expose the Mexican viewer to diverse methods of interpretation mainly because if viewers have no prior knowledge of the theme or topic, they allow themselves to make up conclusions as to what message the advertisement is trying to convey. The reader then attributes a reason behind the image of a product and draws a conclusion based on the person's social status.

The primary finding of this study is that overall, social status and social class are present through the use of images, scenarios, props, selection of texts, English-language use, and the participation of individuals whose phenotype is similar to the light-skinned, blue-eyed individuals from Europe and the United States. In addition, this study reveals the importance that is weighed on power, wealth, exclusivity, and elite access. Social status is attainable through the acquisition of certain products.

The campaigns selected demonstrate how social status is perceived in Mexico by deconstructing the advertisements and analyzing what those characteristics in the display denote as social class. The use of the English language has a representative context, meaning that English symbolizes higher status and is a language of wider prestige. Consequently, in the advertisements researched, the campaigns demonstrate a reflection of high social status and the symbols that society uses as a form to state their social position within a society. Moreover, advertising dictates what is appropriate and acceptable in order to obtain high social status. Thus, I can then state that by acquiring luxury products at high-end prices may not give the person class, but it can give them status; in the advertisements, we see both class and status together. As Bourdieu stated, "What is at stake in symbolic struggles is the imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world and of its divisions, that is to say, symbolic power" (13). Bourdieu refers to the importance of individuals demonstrating their status through classes in society. Ultimately, this is also true in advertising, which is a demonstration of one's status and place in society through products.

Different genres and trends have changed throughout the decades due to advertising that

exposes the viewer to options for obtaining the social status presented in advertisements. Thus, more than changing the way society lives, advertising causes a change in the way members of society think they must live and forces culture to go out and acquire certain items to achieve that style of living. In consumer society, people's decisions are based on the images they view, and they make judgments based on whether they like what they see in advertising. Individuals portrayed in magazines are next to perfect, and advertising makes individuals purchase items with the belief that they will bring them wealth, power, control, and sometimes a dream that they will reach the social status presented. Ultimately, it is offering a lifestyle. In most cases, print advertisements in magazines tell people what to do and how it would feel to experience a particular product.

I can state that in Mexico, the importance of social status is a top priority among individuals who seek to be positioned within the elite. Thus, according to the campaigns presented, it is a norm to place fair-skinned models resembling non-Hispanics to reflect a superior race because their skin color connotes class, exclusivity, education, and social status.

The semiotics reflected in the advertising campaigns were deconstructed through the research lenses of codes, signs, symbols, icons, indexes, and themes; they were then analyzed on how social status is reflected in the campaigns. Consequently, the campaigns denoted the importance of status consumption in Mexico and ultimately its place in society. O'Cass and McEwen stated that "Increasingly, brands are seen as important in creating an identity, a sense of achievement and identification for consumers" (25). Thus, Mexico's conspicuous consumption of advertising like the one included in *Caras* and *Quién*, ultimately, is to establish status within society and demonstrate social status through the accessibility of high-end brands.

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